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STATINTL

Army Alerted Troops in 1968 to Protect Candidates

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WASHINGTON, March 28—The Army, fearing an eruption of civil disturbances during the 1968 Presidential election campaign, had troops on two-hour and six-hour alerts throughout the nation from the spring until after the Nov. 5 Election Day.

Well-placed military sources said that the troops were not moved from their posts but were kept on standby alerts in the event that the Secret Service could not furnish sufficient protection to the candidates.

The alerts were the result of the riots following the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in April, 1968, and the result of the assassination of Senator Robert F. Kennedy in June of that year.

The Secret Service was authorized after Senator Kennedy's death to provide protection for all major candidates and was permitted to call on other departments of Government, including the Army, for help.

The Johnson Administration, in April, 1968, ordered the Army to be ready to move 10,000 troops on short notice into any one of 25 cities. That has been reported before but not until now was it known that troops were also alerted to protect candidates.

Agents at Police Stations

As Election Day approached, military intelligence agents were posted in police stations near the polling places where President Johnson and the candidates voted to call for troops if there were signs of a disturbance that the local police

and the Secret Service could not control.

Those on two-hour alert were companies of 200-250 men and those on six-hour alert were battalions of 600-800 men. The Army was under orders not to move them unless they were instructed to by the Justice Department.

The troop alert was disclosed during inquiries about an Army Teletype message, dated Oct. 18, 1968, from the office of the Army's Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence to the Army Intelligence Command at Fort Holabird, Md.

The message, a copy of which was obtained by The New York Times, requested a daily summary "of any information pertaining to planned demonstrations or disruptions of the November 5 election on a nationwide basis."

The Intelligence Command at that time had about 1,000 military intelligence agents engaged, on orders from the Johnson Administration in a widespread surveillance of civilian political activities in an effort to warn the Administration of impending civil disorders.

The message further requested the Intelligence Command to furnish by midnight of Oct. 20 "the precinct and its address in which the following individuals will vote: Hubert Humphrey, Minnesota; Edmund Muskie, Maine; Richard Nixon, New York; Spiro Agnew, Maryland; George Wallace, Alabama; Curtis Le May, California; President Johnson, Texas."

A military source said that military intelligence agents were not posted near the polling places themselves because of a law that prohibits troops near an election place "unless such force be necessary to re-

pel armed enemies of the United States." Thus they were placed in nearby police stations as liaison between the police and the Army.

Military intelligence agents were earlier reported to have been on duty at the Democratic and Republican Conventions in Chicago and Miami Beach. A military source said that, in addition, "we had our eyes peeled in all directions" throughout the campaign.

Another message from the top Army intelligence office in the Pentagon to the command at Fort Holabird requested information "of intelligence interest" on a monthly magazine called Micro Waves with "particular emphasis on any evidence of subversive intent."

Interest in Magazine

Army intelligence collection plans obtained previously by The New York Times had shown Army interest in the press, but this was the first instance of interest in a particular publication or in newsmen who were not directly involved with covering a civil disorder.

Micro Waves, a magazine concerned with electronics, is published by the Hayden Publishing Company, then of New York and now of Rochelle Park, N. J. Its editor then was Manfred W. Meisels, who has since left the magazine to go into business.

Mr. Meisels, in a telephone interview, said that he had not been aware that the Army had shown any interest in his work. He said he had found "the whole thing hilarious as most people considered us a running dog of the military-industrial complex."

Mr. Meisel surmised, how-

ever, that the Army might have been interested in the magazine's technical articles on electronic counter-measures, the antiballistic missile system, the supersonic transport, and editorials critical of Melvin R. Laird, the Secretary of Defense. The technical articles, he said, often included sensitive technical information.

Mr. Meisel also related, with a touch of irony, an incident in which he had interviewed a senior Russian scientist in 1962. The interview was taped and an article based on the interview published in Micro Waves.

A short time later, he said, officials of the Central Intelligence Agency called on him and requested a copy of the tape to see whether there was further information of intelligence value. He said that after consultation with the magazine's publisher, the tapes were passed to the C.I.A.

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